

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 559

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

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AMCONSUL MADRAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH WEST GERMAN DAILY

1. PRIME MINISTER GANDHI WAS INTERVIEWED BY FRG DAILY, BILD AM SONNTAG, ON JULY 24. THE INTERVIEW WAS CARRIED IN THE INDIAN PRESS AUGUST 11. THE PRIME MINISTER REPEATS HER FAVORITE THEME THAT WHAT SHE DID ON JUNE 26 WAS IN DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY. SHE SAID THAT SHE WAS COMMITTED TO HAVING ELECTIONS BUT THEY COULD NOT BE HELD WHEN "THE POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE EMOTIONAL CONDITION OF

THE OPPOSITION IS DISTURBED." SHE AGAIN DENIED THAT THERE WAS ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN HER CONVICTION ON CHARGES OF ILLEGAL ELECTORAL PRACTICES AND THE DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY. DESCRIBING INDIAN SOCIALISM, MRS. GANDHI SAID, "WE DO ALLOW THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO GROW. BUT WE THINK THAT SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS WHICH AFFECT THE LIVES OF PEOPLE SHOULD NOT BE LEFT TO MARKET FORCES BUT SHOULD BE IN GOVERNMENT HANDS." AS FOR AGRICULTURE, SHE SAID, "WE DO WANT TO TAKE OVER DISTRIBUTION IF WE CAN." SHE REPEATED HER INTENTION NOT TO NATIONALIZE THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE OPPOSITION SOUGHT HER REMOVAL BE-

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CAUSE THEY OPPOSED CHANGES "WHICH THEY THINK I WILL BRING ABOUT."

2. ON FOREIGN REACTION TO THE EMERGENCY, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE WESTERN WORLD HAS NEVER BEEN VERY FRIENDLY. SHE RHETORICALLY ASKED WHY THE WEST WAS NOT ANGRY WITH CHINA'S LACK OF DEMOCRACY. "THE WESTERN COUNTRIES HAVE A PARTICULAR POINT OF VIEW AND THEY STICK TO IT. BUT THAT POINT OF VIEW IS NOT FAVOURABLE TO US. THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND OUR POLICIES AND WHAT WE WANT TO DO." MRS. GANDHI SAID THAT SHE DID NOT WANT TO PAINT ALL OF THE PRESS WITH THE SAME BRUSH BUT NOTED THAT BY AND LARGE IT HAS NOT BEEN FRIENDLY.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER CLAIMED THAT THE EMERGENCY HAD GIVEN THE PEOPLE A NEW SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY. SHE DENIED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WAS GENERALLY BASED ON FEAR. SHE EXPLAINED: "THE BIG BUSINESS NEED FEAR. BUT THE COMMON PEOPLE DO NOT NEED FEAR." SHE CLAIMED THAT SHE NOW HAD MORE POPULAR SUPPORT THAN ANYONE ELSE, BUT THIS DID NOT MEAN THE COUNTRY COULD NOT GET ON WITHOUT HER. THE PEOPLE, SHE SAID, BELIEVED THAT SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE CAPABLE OF FIGHTING EXTREMISTS. "IF ANYONE ELSE CAME IN MY PLACE, THE OPPOSITION WILL BE ABLE TO GET RID OF HIM IN TWO OR THREE MONTHS. THAT IS THE DANGER." SHE CLAIMED THAT MINORITY GROUPS SUCH AS MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS FELT MORE SECURE WITH HER IN POWER. SHE SAID THAT ON JUNE 12 (THE DATE THE ALLAHABAD COURT JUDGEMENT WAS ANNOUNCED) MUSLIMS CAME TO SEE HER BESEECHING HER TO REMAIN IN OFFICE.

(COMMENT: MRS. GANDHI RECENTLY MADE THE SAME POINT CONCERNING A DEMONSTRATION BY MUSLIM WOMEN AT HER RESIDENCE TO A DISTINGUISHED VISITING AMERICAN. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THE GATHERING OF MUSLIM WOMEN AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESIDENCE WAS NOT NEARLY AS LARGE AS MRS. GANDHI NOW CLAIMS.)
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